

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY ARA/RPP:JFKEANE:DEA:WSEARS:BB

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S/NM:RADUGSTAD

S/NM:LALEXANDER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMCONSUL BELIZE

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SNAR

SUBJECT: PAN AMERICAN INTERDICTION PROGRAM

REF: A) STATE 216581 NOTAL, B) MEXICO 18409, 4 NOV 77

THE FOLLOWING IS A COORDINATED STATE/DEA ASSESSMENT AND POSITION.

1. SUMMARY: WE SUPPORT THE PROPOSALS OF SUBJECT STUDY WITH FOLLOWING CAVEATS.

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2. WE CONCUR THAT USG SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT TAKE LEAD BUT ENCOURAGE AG FLORES IF HE DECIDES TO PURSUE THESE EFFORTS. DEA WILL PREPARE A NEW VERSION OF REPORT WHICH COMMANDS SUPPORT OF ALL CONCERNED USG AGENCIES FOR PASSING TO FLORES. END SUMMARY.

3. INTELLIGENCE EXCHANGE:

A. FURTHER STUDY HAS BEEN MADE INTO THE FEASIBILITY OF USING THE EXISTING TELETYPE NETWORK WHICH CONNECTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS WITHIN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO INTO THE TWO EXISTING WORLDWIDE TAPE RELAY SYSTEMS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ROUTINELY AND OVERTLY PASSING GENERAL AIR-

CRAFT MOVEMENT INFORMATION TO THE EL PASO INTELLIGENCE CENTER (EPIC) FOR RECORDS CHECKS. THE CONCEPT IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AND CAN BE IMPLEMENTED AT REASONABLE COST. DEA IS PREPARED TO DEFRAY THOSE COSTS CURRENTLY ESTIMATED AS NECESSARY TO COMMENCE AND SUSTAIN THE PROGRAM. INTELLIGENCE TEST PROJECTS CONDUCTED IN MEXICO WHERE IDENTIFYING DATA WAS TRANSMITTED TO EPIC FOR RECORD CHECKS AND ANALYSIS HAVE RESULTED IN AN ENCOURAGING NUMBER OF HITS WHEREIN AIRCRAFT AND/OR PILOTS WERE ILLUMINATED WHO ARE ON RECORD AS TRAFFICKING IN DRUGS. THE TEST PROJECTS ALSO SHOWED THAT THERE WAS TIME LAG OF DAYS TO WEEKS TO TRANSMIT THE INPUT DATA TO EPIC AND RECEIVE A REPLY. THIS LAG PRECLUDED TIMELY INVESTIGATIVE ACTION BY HOST COUNTRY AUTHORITIES. PROGRAM WOULD GO FAR TOWARD CORRECTING THIS DEFICIENCY. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND FEASIBILITY TESTS HAVE PROGRESSED TO THE STAGE WHERE THIS PLAN CAN REALISTICALLY BE PROPOSED TO ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES AS A PART OF OUR SUGGESTED INTERDICTION PROGRAM, AND TO SIX LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES (WITH EXPANSION POSSIBLE TO PANAMA AND COLOMBIA), AS PART OF A LARGER COOPERATIVE INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM. BECAUSE OF EPIC'S ROLE IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE, WE FEEL THE BEST APPROACH TO CENTRAL AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE THROUGH INDIVIDUAL US MISSION CONTACTS STRESSING THE MULTILATERAL ASPECTS WHEREIN EACH PARTICIPATES AS A FULL AND EQUAL PARTNER. DEA IN GUATEMALA AND COSTA RICA ARE PREPARED TO BRIEF ALL THE MISSIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

B. FOLLOWING DEA BRIEFINGS, WE REQUEST COMMENTS SOONEST FROM MISSIONS CONCERNED. PARTIAL OR INCREMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM IS FEASIBLE SHOULD ANY GOVERNMENT DEMUR.

C. WE AGREE THAT DEA AGENTS SHOULD MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE. HOWEVER, A FEW DEA AGENTS MAY BE REQUIRED AS ADVISORS TO HOST COUNTRY POLICE DURING THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF THE PROGRAM. THEY MAY ALSO BE REQUIRED AS A NORMAL LINK IN THE EXCHANGE OF INVESTIGATIVE QUERIES AND RESPONSES BETWEEN HOST COUNTRIES AND EPIC.

4. WE CONCUR WITH MISSION VIEW THAT AIR PATROL OF SOUTHERN BORDER WOULD PROBABLY BE HIGH COST-LOW RETURN BASED ON USG EXPERIENCE ON US-MEXICAN BORDER. HOWEVER, THE DEA PROPOSAL ALSO SUGGESTS USING AIRCRAFT FOR PATROLS OF SEAWARD APPROACHES TO MEXICO'S TERRITORIAL WATERS. AIR MOBILITY WOULD ALLOW MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTROL OF THESE THINLY SPREAD MFJP UNITS. THIS HAS

PROVEN TO BE EFFECTIVE IN OTHER LOCATIONS. THUS, WE SEE UTILITY OF ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT ON MEXICO'S SOUTHERN BORDER, BUT WE AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY THAT NO DIMINUTION OF GOM NARCOTICS CONTROL CAMPAIGN CAPABILITY SHOULD OCCUR. NOR DO WE SEE AT THIS TIME THE PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF THESE AIRCRAFT COMING FROM OTHER THAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOLELY MEXICAN RESOURCES OR FUNDS. COULD MEXICAN AG AND SEC/DEF PROVIDE RESOURCES? IF SO, USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE SEA SPOTTER AND RELATED TRAINING UPON REQUEST.

5. BORDER SITUATION: BILATERAL PERIODIC MEXICAN-GUATEMALAN BORDER SATURATION OPERATIONS INCLUDING HIGHLY MOBILE ROADBLOCK" MAKE GOOD SENSE AND FOSTER COOPERATION. WE FIRST SUGGESTED THAT BELIZE SHOULD BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE WITH MEXICO WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT TRILATERAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE THREE COUNTRIES IS PROBABLY NOT FEASIBLE.

6. WE AGREE THAT MEXICAN NAVY PARTICIPATION IS VERY DESIRABLE. TO STRENGTHEN THIS PROPOSAL YOU MAY DESIRE TO POINT OUT THAT US COAST GUARD IN COOPERATION WITH DEA AND US CUSTOMS HAS INTERDICITED MANY VESSELS SMUGGLING DRUGS COMING FROM SOUTH AMERICA FOR DELIVERY OFF THE EASTERN SEABOARD OF THE UNITED STATES. DURING OPERATION BUCCANEER CONDUCTED IN 1974 FOR EXAMPLE, US COAST GUARD PARTICIPATION RESULTED IN 17 VESSELS SEIZED WHILE IN THE ACT OF SMUGGLING DRUGS FROM JAMAICA. MORE RECENTLY, A COOPERATIVE OPERATION INVOLVING THE COAST GUARD, DEA AND US CUSTOMS IN THE CARIBBEAN HAS RESULTED IN THE SEIZURE OF 19 VESSELS DURING A 120-DAY PERIOD.

7. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ABOVE, PROPOSAL OF THOSE CONCEPTS DEVELOPED BY THE STUDY FOR MEXICO ARE CONCURRED IN AND SHOULD BE MADE TO ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES AT THE EARLIEST DATE.

8. OTHER SPECIFIC POINTS RAISED IN REFTEL WILL BE ADDRESSED IN SEPTEL. VANCE
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